

Project #1
Analysis and Presentation
of Common Software

“Only by understanding the biases of the media through which we engage with the world can we differentiate between what we intend, and what the machines we’re using intend for us—whether they or their programmers even know it.” Douglas Rushkoff (Kindle Locations 233-235).

This assignment calls on you to do an analysis of a piece of common software in order to explain its usability, user appeal, and what Douglas Rushkoff calls software’s *biases*. The ultimate goal is to get a sense of what makes good software design as well as how software *influences and determines* human behavior and social interactions. **Your 3-5 page paper must also have a visual component to it.**

Topics you must address:

- What is the purpose of the software?
- Who is the intended user for the software?
- What *warrants*, or underlying assumptions about the user, does the software make in an effort to appeal to its users?
- In what ways is the software organized to enable the user’s goals?
- In what ways does the software interfere with or block the user’s goals or force the user to adapt to the software’s design?
- What would you suggest to improve the software as both *a tool* and a *cultural artifact*?

Try to choose **software** you tend to use regularly to critically examine. Web applications like Facebook, Twitter, Amazon, or Instapaper are acceptable.

This assignment will be graded based on the thoroughness and depth of your analysis. You may do outside research, but you are not *required* to, aside from the web application you are analyzing. However, if you do bring in outside research, it must be documented in your works-cited page.

The paper must be 3-5 pages, single-spaced, with a separate works-cited page (which does not count toward your page count).

Due: Thursday, February 8th

Project #2 Personal Themed Website

One of the major assignments for this course will be the design and creation of your own personal website based on a social cultural theme that addresses local Texas issues.

Your website will have the following elements in it:

- Your site will have **a theme** of some sort, based on topics that one could find in a newspaper. For instance, your theme might be the history of segregation in Texas, gender inequality in some Texas institution, health care and the poor, etc. You may also use a theme based on some subcategory of these examples.
- It will have four (4) hyperlinked pages
- Your site, overall, will have at least 1000 words of textual information
- One or more images on each page within the site
- Some type of navigation pane located in the same area of each page
- Each page will have a look and feel consistent with the overall theme

Your site's content should be informative. I want you to build a site that not only has a theme, but also conveys information about a specific topic within that theme.

For instance, your theme might be “sports,” and specifically about local little-league soccer. Such a site would address some important issue related to little-league soccer in Texas, or more specifically Fort Worth, TX. Ideally, visitors to your site would learn something new and interesting about the topic.

Due: Thursday, March 1st --Turn in via Dropbox upload that I will give you

Project #3

Adding an Audio Interview or Narrative to Your Site

For your third project, you will be expanding your website to include an audio interview or narrative based on the topic of your site. You will arrange to record an interview with a person directly related to your topic. Once you have digitally recorded your interview, you will edit it and prepare it to be embedded into your website. Here are the criteria:

- Your interview must be of one or more **real people** who have a direct or professional relationship to your topic. If your topic is elderly care and class, you might interview a local elder or community leader who has experience in the matter. **The person you interview cannot be a member of your family!**
- The final recording must be between 5-8 minutes in length. The final edited version of your interview **must not** exceed 8 minutes in length. **
- Your interview should be saved as an MP3 file

Your interview may take the form of a straight interview, or edited into a narrative, such as might be heard on a radio show like “This American Life.”

Due: Thursday, March 29

--Will be turned in by embedding it into your website by the due time for evaluation by the instructor prior to class

**** (Any project shorter than 5 minutes or longer than 8 minutes will receive a “0” grade.)**

Project #4 Creating a Twine Narrative

For this assignment, you will be writing a story. The story may be of absolutely **any genre**, or even a mix of genres.

Here are the requirements:

- The story must be written using the Twine writing platform. <http://twinery.org>
- The story must be at least 4000 words in length.
- You must have at least one (1) link per 200 words in your story
- The story needs to have a **plot** and **structure** (a beginning, middle and end; dialogue; character development; etc.) regardless how many plotlines (or subplots) you end up with.
- There must be at least four (4) completely different endings to this story. Each ending needs to be distinct and reflect the array of choices the reader made as she navigated the various passages of your story.

Your story will be turned in on Thursday, December 3rd **at the beginning of class**. So have it finished before arrival.

Tuesday, May 1st , before class begins.